

As my colleagues may be aware, the country has a troubled history of violence and instability. A 12-year civil war resulted in 300,000 deaths. Though the past 10 years have been relatively stable, there have been troubling reports of murders, harassment, and intimidation in rural areas carried out by the Imbonerakure, an armed youth group believed to be associated with the ruling party. According to the United Nations, U.N., over 90,000 refugees have fled Burundi since April, concerned about potential violence in the runup to the July 15 Presidential election. Some of the refugees claim they fear being targeted by government-allied militia. More than 27,000 refugees have fled to Rwanda, a country with its own troubled history of ethnic conflict.

President Pierre Nkurunziza's announcement on April 25 that he was running for a third term—a move which appears to violate the Burundian constitution—has caused over 1 month of protests in the Burundian capital, Bujumbura. The Burundian Red Cross has stated that at least 21 people have died during the protests, most reportedly killed by police who have fired live ammunition at protesters. Others have been killed by a series of grenade attacks by unknown parties and more than 500 have been injured. On May 23, opposition leader Zedi Feruzi was killed by unidentified gunmen, and private radio and television stations have been raided, burned, and shut down. Social media websites used to organize protests have been blocked and prominent journalists and activists have been arrested. While some of these individuals have since been released, the crackdown on dissenting voices is disturbing. There are also reports of smaller protests outside of the capital, which signals the potential for the violence to spread, should the police respond in a similarly heavyhanded way. The situation is volatile and analysts are increasingly concerned that the situation could suddenly erupt into wide-scale killings resulting in hundreds of deaths.

The Obama administration has been actively engaged in an effort to avert mass atrocities in Burundi for more than a year. Various senior-level administration officials—including former U.S. Special Envoy for the African Great Lakes Russ Feingold, Ambassador Samantha Power, Assistant Secretary Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Under Secretary Wendy Sherman, Under Secretary Sarah Sewall, and even Secretary of State John Kerry—have spoken with Burundian officials, regional leaders, and other international donors in an effort to dissuade President Nkurunziza from running for office again.

In the wake of the protests, regional leaders are playing an active role in trying to calm the situation. The countries of the East African Community, EAC, have sent Foreign Ministers to Bujumbura to discuss the crisis with a range of stakeholders. The organiza-

tion held two emergency meetings in May, one of which Assistant Secretary of State Thomas-Greenfield attended. The African Union and the International Conference of the Great Lakes have also convened to discuss the crisis.

I applaud ongoing administration and regional efforts. I am concerned, however, that they may not be sufficient. The U.N. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, Said Djinnit, was dispatched to bring the parties together to find a negotiated solution, but he has stepped down after being accused by opposition groups of being biased toward the government's position. Despite the delay in the polls from June to July, conditions for a democratic contest do not exist. There is no space for the opposition to campaign and the media cannot operate freely. And even in the face of the international community's repeated visits, calls, and messaging on the importance of putting the good of the country before personal political ambitions, President Nkurunziza still has refused to do the right thing and step aside as his party's candidate.

I recommend that we take three additional steps. No. 1, urge U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and African Union, AU, Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma to work with regional leaders to achieve a common approach to a political settlement for Burundi that includes Pierre Nkurunziza stepping aside as his party's candidate. It should also include a postponement of elections until a way forward is agreed to by the ruling party and the opposition that lays the groundwork for a legitimate contest. The current delay in the polling date gets us nowhere if conditions for credible elections still are not in place. A show of solidarity on these issues will powerfully signal the international community's commitment to a transparent, fair democratic process, and could serve to alleviate tension on the ground. President Nkurunziza should be urged to hold police responsible for killing protesters, ensure that media can operate freely, and allow for some means of verification that he is disarming the Imbonerakure and other armed militia as called for by the EAC and referenced by the African Union.

No. 2, I urge President Obama to appoint a Great Lakes Special Envoy to replace Russ Feingold as soon as possible. Having a senior-level State Department official working fulltime toward a negotiated settlement at this volatile time will greatly enhance the efforts that administration officials are making to ensure peace.

Finally, I call upon the administration to refrain from beginning new training of, or making additional plans to provide military equipment to, the Burundian military at this juncture. While the military has not been accused of violence against civilians or abuses related to the protests, I see no advantage in moving forward with additional programs given the volatile

situation on the ground. We can resume assistance once we are confident that the security situation is stable.

The situation in Burundi is troubling, but I do not believe it is hopeless. I stand ready to support the administration's efforts to prevent another tragedy from unfolding in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE RECEIVED DURING ADJOURNMENT

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Under the order of the Senate of January 6, 2015, the Secretary of the Senate, on June 12, 2015, during the adjournment of the Senate, received a message from the House of Representatives announcing that the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY) has signed the following enrolled bill:

S. 1568. An act to extend the authorization to carry out the replacement of the existing medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Denver, Colorado, to authorize transfers of amounts to carry out the replacement of such medical center, and for other purposes.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 2:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2685. An act making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1295) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to improve the process for making determinations with respect to whether such organizations are exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of such code, with an amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate, and that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the title of the bill.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH) announced that on today, June 15, 2015, he has signed the following bill, which was previously signed by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY):

S. 1568. An act to extend the authorization to carry out the replacement of the existing medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Denver, Colorado, to authorize transfers of amounts to carry out the replacement of such medical center, and for other purposes.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 2685. An act making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal